

study has provided statistics on the extent and magnitude of various forms of child abuse. The study has also thrown up data on variations among different age groups, gender variations, state variations and variations within evidence groups. The findings will help to strengthen the understanding of all stakeholders including families, civil society organizations and the state. The Report of the Study is available on the website of the Ministry at www.ced.nic.in

The Ministry after going through the findings of the report will draw up a plan to reduce child abuse and maltreatment in the country after due consideration and after consultation with all concerned Government and non-government agencies.

Practice of Devdasi

†3028. SHRI SHAHID SIDDIQUI: Will the Minister of WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

- (a) whether there are several such States where in the name of caste and religion the custom of Devdasi is in practice since centuries;
- (b) if so, the names of the States alongwith the details thereof;
- (c) the steps Government are taking to do away with this custom under which physical and mental exploitation of women is done;
- (d) the number of such women in the country who are being made victims of exploitation under this custom of Devdasi;
- (e) the names of those places, monasteries and temples where this custom is in practice since centuries; and
- (f) the action being taken against those people involved in it alongwith the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT (SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY): (a) and (b) As per information available, the custom of Devdasi is in practice in Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. These States have Acts on prohibition and dedication of Devdasis.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(c) As far as Ministry of Women and Child Development is concerned, the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956 (ITPA) supplemented by the Indian Penal Code prohibits trafficking in women and children for purposes of prostitution and lays down severe penalties for traffickers. The ITPA is now being further amended providing for more stringent punishment for trafficking in persons. The Ministry of Women and Child Development conducts advocacy, awareness generation, sensitization programmes for prevention of trafficking for prostitution, including traditional practices of devdasis. State Governments undertake preventive and awareness programmes.

(d) and (e) As per information received from Maharashtra, there are 4321 Devdasis.

The Maharashtra Government has intimated that the tradition of Devdasi is carried out in Khanoba Temple, Jajuri Tehsil of Pune District.

The State Government of Karnataka through Women and Child Development Department has conducted a survey during 1993-94 and identified 22783 Devdasis. The State Government has intimated that the custom of Devdasi is not a practice any more in the State.

As per the information received from Government of Andhra Pradesh, a detailed survey identified 24,093 Devdasis in the State.

The State Government has intimated that the custom of Devdasi is not practice any more in the State.

(f) Under the Acts pertaining to the prohibition and dedication of Devdasis whoever performs, promotes, abets, takes part in dedication ceremony is liable for punishment.

Infant mortality

3029. SHRIMATI HEMA MALINI: Will the Minister of WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that 12 lakhs new born children die in the first four weeks and 8 lakhs die before completing one year of their life;

(b) whether it is also a fact that 47 per cent of children under the age of 3 years are underweight;